

Message Text

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46

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 AGR-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-03 LAB-04

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 AID-05 CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-04

ITC-01 TRSE-00 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 FEAE-00 OMB-01

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R 091100Z MAR 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3870

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0219

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EIND EPAP

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH BARATTOLO TEXTILE MANAGER

REF: ASMARA 0024 (DTG 121105Z JAN 76)

1. ON MARCH 9 CONGENOFF VISITED BARATTOLO TEXTILE COMPANY
GENERAL MANAGER ATO BEYANE DEBESSAY TO DISCUSS CURRENT OPERATIONS
OF HIS PLANT AND PROSPECTS FOR RAW COTTON. BEYANE SAID THAT THE
QUESTIONRGF OBTAINING RAW COTTON WAS BECOMING CRITICAL AND THAT
SINCE NO SHIPMENT HAS BEEN RECEIVED SINCE DEC, BY END OF MARCH
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PRODUCTION WOULD COME TO STANDSTILL UNLESS NEW SUPPLY RECEIVED.

AT PRESENT THERE ARE 35 BARATTOLO TRUCKS LOADED WITH COTTON WHICH ARE STUCK IN AGORDAT. THEY LEFT BEYANE'S TESENEY PLANTATION OVER A MONTH AGO AND ARE AWAITING MILITARY ESCORT TO BRING THEM ON TO ASMARA. THIS SHIPMENT IS ESTIMATED TO SUSTAIN PRODUCTION FOR NOT MORE THAN SIX WEEKS. BEYANE SAID BARATTOLO HAD ESCHEWED THE ALTERNATIVE OF BRINGING COTTON TO THE BARATTOLO PLANT FROM SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA AS HE FELT THAT EPMG MILITARY WOULD LOSE INTEREST IN PROVIDING SECURITY FOR CONVOYS COMING FROM TESENEY, THUS CAUSING TESENEY PLANTATION TO BE CLOSED DOWN.

2. HARVESTING OF COTTON AT TESENEY IS HAMPERED BY LACK OF FARM LABORERS, CURRENTLY ONLY 2,000 AS OPPOSED TO THE NORMAL 7-8,000. IN THE PAST MOST OF THESE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS CAME FROM TIGRE PROVINCE, AS WAS ALSO THE CASE OF 80-100,000 AGRICULTURAL WORKERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN HARVEST IN THE HUMERA AREA. BEYANE SPECULATES THAT ONE OF THE PRIMARY REASONS FOR DISTURBANCES IN TIGRE IS THE UNEMPLOYMENT RESULTING FROM CLOSING DOWN OF COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS IN ERITREA AND NW BEGEMDIR.

3. ON QUESTION OF MARKETING, BEYANE SAID THAT SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA COULD ABSORB ALL THE PRODUCTION HIS PLANT COULD PUT OUT. HE SAID IT WAS APPARENT TO ECONOMIC AUTHORITIES THAT SEVERE SHORTAGE OF TEXTILES IN ETHIOPIA WAS IMMINENT. HE MADE REFERENCE TO A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN INTEGRATED TEXTILE PLANT EMPLOYING OVER 6,000 EMPLOYEES WHICH WOULD BE LOCATED SOMEWHERE OTHER THAN ASMARA OR ADDIS, LOCATION APPARENTLY STILL UNDETERMINED. ONLY PROBLEM MARKETING AT PRESENT IS UNRELIABILITY OF CONVOYS FROM ASMARA TO ADDIS.

4. BEYANE WAS ASKED WHY ROBERTO BARATTOLO, FORMER OWNER AND OPERATOR OF COTTON/TEXTILE COMPLEX IN ERITREA, REMAINS IN ERITREA AS SPECIAL ADVISOR TO NATIONALIZED BARATTOLO PLANT. BEYANE OPINED THAT BARATTOLO REMAINED IN THE HOPE THAT HE MIGHT BE ALLOWED TO REESTABLISH AN OPERATION OF HIS OWN AT SOME FUTURE DATE. IN ADDITION, BEYANE SPECULATED THAT BARATTOLO FELT THE LONGER HE REMAINED IN ERITREA THE BETTER HIS CHANCES OF RECEIVING JUST COMPENSATION FROM THE EPMG FOR THE SEIZURE OF HIS MANY INVESTMENTS.

5. BEYANE SAID ON A RECENT VISIT TO TESENEY HE MET A RELATIVE
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WHO DISCUSSED WITH HIM THE SITUATION OF ERITREAN REFUGEES IN SUDAN. THESE REFUGEES, ESTIMATED BY BEYANE AT OVER 100,000, ARE APPARENTLY FINDING LIFE LESS RIGOROUS THAN MIGHT BE EXPECTED. ITALIAN CONSTRUCTION FIRMS, WORKING ON SUDANESE GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS FUNDED BY THE KUWAIT GOVERNMENT, APPARENTLY PREFER TO HIRE ERITREANS AS DRIVERS, MECHANICS, SKILLED AND UNSKILLED LABORERS. AS RESULT, ERITREANS ARE FINDING GREATER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAN WERE AVAILABLE IN THE RECENT PAST.

6. CONGENOFF BROACHED QUESTION TO BEYANE OF POSSIBILITY OF
HE AND SENIOR ECONOMIC LOCAL HITCHING RIDE TO TESENEY ON BARATTOLO
AIRCRAFT. BEYANE RESPONDED THAT THIS SHOULD POSE NO PROBLEM
AS AIRCRAFT FLYS THREE TIMES PER WEEK TO TESENEY, AND IF
PERMISSION IS GRANTED BY MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, HE IS
PREPARED TO ARRANGE TRIP.
SHERRY

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